

VZCZCXRO8286  
RR RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW  
DE RUEHCI #0328 3391044  
ZNR UUUUU  
R 041044Z DEC 08  
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000328

SIPDIS

USDA FOR DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY/ETERPSTRA  
USDA FOR OFSO/JDEYER  
USDA FOR FAS/OA/MYOST/WKMILLER  
USDA FOR FAS/OCRA/CALEXANDER/JCARVER  
USDA FOR FAS/OSTA/CHAMILTON  
USDA FOR APHIS/MFLEMINGS/TBURLESON  
SEOUL FOR APHIS/GEORGE ANDY BALL  
DEPARTMENT FOR SA/PB, EB/TPP, AIAG HREED-ROWE

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#)  
SUBJECT: CONFIRMED AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK IN ASSAM

REF: KOLKATA 298

11. (U) SUMMARY: On November 27 the Government of India (GOI) Ministry of Agriculture confirmed an outbreak of avian influenza (H5N1) found in birds, primarily poultry, in the state of Assam. No human cases have been reported. The state government has imposed restrictions on poultry movement and begun culling operations in 40 villages.

12. (U) On November 27, Bhopal's High Security Animal Diseases Laboratory confirmed the existence of the H5N1 virus in poultry in the Northeastern state of Assam. The Agriculture Ministry reported the outbreak in Rajabazar, a village located on the western bank of the Brahmaputra River about 30 miles northwest of the state capital Guwahati. On November 28, the GOI notified the World Organization of Animal Health about the outbreak. The Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup (Rural) district, who is in charge of district culling operations, told EconFSN that confirmed H5N1 samples had also been found in three more villages surrounding the Guwahati Airport. According to him, 350 birds/poultry have died since November 21.

13. (U) The Assam government's Animal Husbandry Department, with a monitoring group of three central government officials, culled poultry from 20 villages within a two-mile radius of Rajabazar. By December 1, twenty-seven Rapid Response Teams, each composed of between five to seven personnel, had together culled more than 45,000 birds; and destroyed their eggs, feed and litter. The second phase of culling in twenty-three villages will begin on December 4. According to the Kamrup Deputy Commissioner, the district has adequate supplies of Tamiflu, but lacks training in culling and decontamination techniques. Despite the restrictions on poultry movement, press contacts in Guwahati confirmed that poultry continue to be available on the market.

Comment

14. (SBU) This is the first confirmed outbreak of the H5N1 virus in India since May 16, 2008. Culling and containing the outbreak in Assam is difficult due to the informal and non-industrial nature of poultry cultivation and the state government's lacking of training in culling and decontamination techniques. Poloff is traveling to Assam from December 10 - 13 and will follow up on the state's efforts to address the outbreak.

PAYNE